

VOTE - Voter Outreach Through Education Washington Secretary of State

UNITED STATES AND WORLD CURRICULUM GRADES 8-12 STUDENT HANDOUT, LESSON 9

THEME: GOTV (GET OUT THE VOTE)

Two noteworthy and outspoken visionaries in our nation's history spoke about the struggle for equal rights, including voting, and the hard fact that those who wanted that right would have to demand and work for it.

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet deprecate (disapprove of) agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never has and it never will."
(Frederick Douglass, former slave turned abolitionist leader)

"In the new code of laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make, I desire you would remember the ladies and be more favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited powers into the hands of husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could. If particular care and attention are not paid to the ladies, we are determined to foment a rebellion and will not hold ourselves bound to obey any laws in which we have no voice or representation."
(Abigail Adams, wife of John Adams, leader in the movement to gain independence from England)

The women's movement in the 19th and 20th centuries effectively used both campaign posters and songs to convey its message that women demand and deserve full suffrage. This 1893 pro-suffrage poster protested that women had the same political rights as others who at that time were legally denied the vote, namely those institutionalized for mental and criminal reasons and Native Americans.

Women also used marches, lobbying, slogans, humorous speeches and songs -- songs like "She's good enough to be your mother, so she's good enough to vote with you."

In similar fashion, the 1960s saw a movement to secure the vote by and for those over 18 year olds. At that time, the voting age was 21 but the age for being drafted into military service was 18. A very powerful catch phrase was made into a campaign theme: "If I'm old enough to die for my country, I should be allowed to vote in it."

Those groups cited above have won the vote. Today, the challenge is not to extend suffrage to disenfranchised groups but rather to mobilize the suffrage potential they have, particularly new voters in the age range of 18 to 24 year olds.

This activity is designed to meld the powerfully creative techniques of the past with the urgency of today. It calls for you to model your pro-suffrage ancestors in a campaign to mobilize young voters to act on rights that were secured for them, rights that you too will inherit soon if you haven't already, by turning 18 years old.

ACTIVITY:

Imagine that you are employed by the advertising firm of Douglass, King, Adams and Paul. Your firm has been hired by the Office of the Secretary of State to increase voter participation by young adults, with a target group of 18-to-24 year olds. As with any large advertising firm, the campaign is assigned to teams, each tasked to create a plan and then to present it at a meeting of all teams and the director. They will then choose which campaign to use.

Your team is to design an advertising campaign using a song, a catch phrase, a poster, a commercial (for radio or television), a short play (or video), a humorous speech, a PowerPoint presentation, poem, or combination of the above. You must also type a one page defense of your message and approach which explains why you chose your message and medium and why it is likely to increase voting by the target group.

Each campaign must be no longer than five minutes. The final product by each team, including written defense, will be presented to the



other teams and a vote will decide which campaign the firm has chosen.

This will require some planning and creative time by your team. The finished product will have to be completed at home since it requires materials generation, rehearsal and a formal written proposal, so be sure to plan enough time for that phase.